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1947

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Theatre Critics Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS — NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK MIRROR — NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK SUN — NEW YORK POST — NEW YORK TIMES

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"Alice in Wonderland"

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

APRIL 7, 1947

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Easter Present

THE American Repertory Theater, having already skipped its original pitch, is reviving "Alice in Wonderland" for an indefinite engagement at the International. The Eva Le Gallienne - Florida Priebus dramatization of the Lewis Carroll fantasy, hewing to the Tenniel illustrations of the classic, is quite as enchanting as it was when it was first shown here some fifteen years ago. Combining the title book with "Through the Looking Glass," the show has an abundance of comical nonsense. The players on hand for the current production, from Miss Le Gallienne to Henry Jones, make capital of wondrous musings. The only catch in the show is that even fantasy can become surfeiting when free imagination is tethered.

* * *

Fortunately, "Alice in Wonderland" has a lovely Alice to engage in "friendly chats with bird and beast." Bambi Lynn, who may be gratefully remembered for her performance in "Carousel," is altogether captivating as the seven-year-old youngster who tangles with chess queens, Humpty-dumpty, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the White Knight and an odd assortment of our feathered and finny friends. She plays the part with laudable under-emphasis, giving the adeptly tricky production its full due. Marionettes alternate with human players in the Walrus and the Carpenter scene. The offering does its best to translate literary fancy to theatrical terms. It still seems a somewhat dubious undertaking.

* * *

There is no denying the simple stage legerdemain which has a little girl walking through a mirror, diving down a rabbit's burrow into an enchanted garden and sitting in on a mad tea party. With a black backdrop and an economy of props, this International Theater exhibit conjures up a deal of magic and quiet laughter. The masks by Remo Bufano permit such excellent players as Richard Waring and Philip Bourneuf to extend normal pantomime into something else again. Not being seven years old and a Lewis Carroll fan, it is hard to define the essential deficiency in the production. As a supposed adult, it can only be noted that "Alice In Wonderland" becomes somewhat tiresome for all its brilliant conceits.

'ALICE IN WONDERLAND.'

Lewis Carroll's story, adapted for the stage by Eva LeGallienne and Florida Friebus; based on the Tenniel drawings; scenery designed by Robert Rowe Paddock; costumes by Noel Taylor; masks and marionettes by Remo Bufano; music by Richard Addinsell; orchestra conducted by Tibor Kozma; choreography by Ruth Wilton; entire production devised and directed by Eva LeGallienne; presented by Rita Hassan and the American Repertory Theater at the International Saturday evening, April 5, 1947. The cast:

Alice (*By arrangement with David O. Selznick*)	Bambi Linn
White Rabbit	William Windom (Julie Harris)
Mouse	Henry Jones
Dodo	John Straub
Lory	Angus Cairns
Eaglet	Arthur Keegan
Crab	Don Allen
Duck	Eli Wallach
Caterpillar	Theodore Tenley
Fish Footman	Ed Woodhead
Frog Footman	Robert Rawlings
Duchess	Raymond Greenleaf
Cook	Don Allen
Cheshire Cat	Donald Keyes
March Hare	Arthur Keegan
Mad Hatter	Richard Waring
Dormouse	Theodore Tenley
2 of Spades	Eli Wallach
5 of Spades	Robert Rawlings
7 of Spades	Donald Keyes
Queen of Hearts	John Becher
Kings of Hearts	Eugene Stockmann
Knave of Hearts	Frederic Hunter
Gryphon	Jack Manning
Mock Turtle	Angus Cairns
5 of Clubs	John Rehney
6 of Clubs	Bart Henderson
7 of Clubs	John Straub
9 of Clubs	Thomas Grace

PART TWO.

Red Chess Queen	Margaret Webster
Train Guard	John Straub
Gentleman Dressed in White Paper	William Windom
Goat	Don Allen
Beetle Voice	Donald Keyes
Goat Voice	Cavada Humphrey
Gentle Voice	Angus Cairns
Other Voices	Mary Alice Moore, Eli Wallace
Tweedledum	Robert Rawlings
Tweedledee	Jack Manning
White Chess Queen	Eva LeGallienne
Sheep	Theodore Tenley
Humpty Dumpty	Henry Jones
White Knight	Philip Bourneuf
Horse (Front Legs)	Will Davis
Horse (Back Legs)	Charles Townsely
Old Frog	Donald Keyes
Shrill Voice	Angus Cairns
Singers	Eloise Rogers, Rae Lee

SYNOPSIS: Part One—Alice at home. The looking-glass house. White Rabbit. Pool of Tears. Caucus Race. Caterpillar. Duchess. Cheshire Cat. Mad Tea Party. Queen's Croquet Ground. By the Sea. The Trial.

Part Two—Red Chess Queen. Railway Carriage. Tweedledum and Tweedledee. White Chess Queen. Wood and water. Humpty Dumpty. White Knight. Alice Crowned. Alice with the Two Queens. The Banquet. Alice at Home Again.

Miss Le Gallienne plays her original role of the White Chess Queen with querulous emphasis. She is given solid support by Margaret Webster, who is associated with her in the American Repertory Theater. The Red Chess Queen is both fantastical and funny. Robert Rawlings and Jack Manning are fine as Tweedledum and Tweedledee and William Windom makes the White Rabbit a particularly appealing hippety-hoppity character. Richard Addinsell's accompanying music sticks to the mood of the show; Robert Rowe Paddock has designed effective settings and Miss Le Gallienne's staging leaves little to be desired.

DAILY NEWS

APRIL 7, 1947

Splendid 'Alice in Wonderland' Tops Off a Season of Fantasies

By JOHN CHAPMAN

This has been quite a season for fantasy, what with "Finian's Rainbow" and "Brigadoon," and it is fitting that it should be topped off with "Alice in Wonderland." And it truly is a topping-off—a delightful, wonderful realization of Lewis Carroll's masterworks of whimsey, "Alice" and "Through the Looking Glass."

Rita Hassan and the American Repertory Theatre presented "Alice in Wonderland" at the International Theatre Saturday evening, and I most earnestly hope that this production will make the American Rep go a long way toward forgetting the earlier hardships and disappointments of its season.

I had seen "Alice" 15 years ago when Eva Le Gallienne first offered it at the Civic Repertory, and had been enchanted by it. As I returned to it last Saturday I wondered what dreadful damage 15 years might have done—not to the play, but to me. Would it now seem just a little silly, or overdone, or not as funny as it once was?

My worries vanished the moment the lights came up on the stage to reveal little Bambi Linn curled in the big armchair chatting with her cat. When she got up on the arm of the chair, and from there to the mantel, and stepped right through the mirror over the mantel, I was right there behind her—right in the middle of a wonderland of dodos, lorys, mock turtles, duchesses, red and white queens, March hares and white rabbits.

Bambi Linn took things as they came—shrinking to three inches of height, seeing caucus races and getting sober advice from a caterpillar without a ruffle of her long, blonde hair. I was much more impatient than she. I was always eager for the next adventure, and wondering whether it would be Tweedledum or Tweedledee, or the Walrus and the Carpenter, or the trial, or what. When it all was over and Alice was once more curled in her armchair I felt like a little restive child who, having been regaled with a long jolt of bedtime stories, should go decently to sleep—but who instead clamors, "Tell me more!"

Miss Linn makes a perfect Alice. She is a picture right out of the book, and when she said she was seven and a half years old I solemnly believed her. She is on the stage every moment—and trouping every moment. It is a splendid performance, rating the cheers the first-nighters bestowed.

Addinsell's Fine Score.

I had remembered almost all of the Civic Repertory "Alice;" had remembered the skill and right feeling with which Eva Le Gallienne and Florida Griebus had adapted Lewis Carroll's books, and how the Tenniel illustrations had marvelously been made to come to life. But I found on Saturday that memory had slipped on one important point: the music of Richard Addinsell.

Mr. Addinsell's score is not just background music; it is a work of art. It is just as funny, just as gay, just as whimsical as the play itself. There is nothing in town more amusing than his schmaltzy waltz melody for the Mock Turtle's ode to "beautiful, beautiful soup."

The company is a large one, and to give thanks to all who deserve it would be to list the whole cast of characters. But I must mention Raymond Greenleaf's Duchess, Angus Cairns' Mock Turtle, Richard Waring's Mad Hatter, Margaret Webster's Red Queen, Miss Le Gallienne's White Queen, Philip Bourneuf's White Knight and the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of Robert Rawlings and Jack Manning.

And the costumes, masks and marionettes, by Noel Taylor and Remo Bufano, and the settings by Robert Rowe Paddock, are magical.

The Sun

APRIL 7, 1947

'Alice in Wonderland' Is Charmingly Played, Ingeniously Staged at Circle.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

The players of the American Repertory Theater have done Shakespeare and Barrie and Ibsen at Columbus Circle this season, and with indifferent results. Now, saving their best trick for their last, they turn to the fantasy of Lewis Carroll and come through triumphantly. "Alice in Wonderland," put on Saturday evening at the International, is a complete delight.

The production is magically staged, with music and stage mechanics nicely synchronized. The players catch, and they retain, the spirit of the fantasy and they play it charmingly all the way. It's my pleasure to report that "Alice in Wonderland" provides an evening of enchanting unreality, of wonderful nonsense. Columbus Circle must now be included in the itinerary of every playgoer, either tot or graybeard, who is seeking the very best that our theater affords.

Bambi Linn is a fine choice for little Alice of the shining, golden hair, who pushes her way through the Looking Glass and has an evening of incredible adventures. She wanders about in the cock-eyed world of her dreams, meeting such creatures as the White Rabbit and the Mad Hatter, the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, the Red Chess Queen and the White Chess Queen. Miss Linn runs and walks and dances; she grows large and small, and swims in her tears. This young actress is straightforward in her playing, she speaks distinctly and beguilingly, and her Alice is a polite little girl, wide-eyed but also very grave and judicious. It's an Alice who never becomes too cute, too coy or too childlike.

Margaret Webster has a holiday playing the frightening, disdainful Red Queen; so does Eva LeGallienne, back in her old role of the spookish White Queen, who, notwithstanding a costume of considerable tonnage, comes sweeping wraith-like out of the sky. Richard Waring gets fun into his interpretation of the grotesque, unpredictable Mad Hatter. Philip Bourneuf is amusing and somewhat touching as the spectral White Knight, who is so shockingly clumsy. Angus Cairns is a gabby and melancholy Mock Turtle and Jack Manning a spirited Gryphon.

There are also engaging performances from John Becher as the raucous Queen of Hearts, Raymond Greenleaf as the outlandish Duchess, Henry Jones as a self-satisfied Humpty Dumpty, Theodore Tenley as the mildly fretful Caterpillar and Will Davis and Charles Townley, playing the front and back legs of a docile horse. The scenery of Robert Rowe Paddock and the costumes of Noel Taylor, faithful to the Tenniel drawings, do a great deal for the lovely production. Remo Bufalo's masks have a charm of their own and Richard Addinsell's music is just what it should be. The adaptation used is that of Eva LeGallienne and Florida Friebus, taken from the Carroll text, and the same that was played back in 1932, when Miss LeGallienne was the White Queen n 14th street.

"Alice in Wonderland," produced by Rita Hassan and the American Repertory Theater, is something not to miss. It has everything, including a real kitten and a live pig. And it serves as a reminder that there is nothing wrong with the New York theater that folklore and fantasy won't cure. Put sprites and elves upon a stage and business booms. The good people of the A. R. T. are now given our heartiest, if somewhat belated, congratulations.

New York World-Telegram

APRIL 7, 1947

'Alice' Puts Audience In a Gentle Delirium

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The American Repertory Theater's production of "Alice in Wonderland" is as it should be, a journey into a world of complete illusion. Its fantastic shapes and irrational reason have a way of making you feel disembodied.

There is a charmingly unreal perspective in the first view behind the curtain. Alice and her kitten are discovered lounging in an enormous armchair beneath the shimmering looking-glass, all of it so large that the size and shape of the world around you are irretrievably lost.

From that moment until the end of the play you exist in a kind of gentle delirium in which there is no normal reaction, but no surprise at the unexpected.

Alice's frustration at her changing size and the recalcitrant door is as annoying as the fight one puts up against an anesthesia. Once that sequence is past, you swim along in a subconscious that is enchantingly provided for you.

Musical Mock Turtle.

With the 7-year-old princess of Wonderland you attend a sagely nonsensical quorum of mythical birds, discuss life at its maddest with the surly caterpillar and meet the Duchess whose baby turns into a pig in no uncertain terms.

The March Hare, the Mad Hatter and the Dormouse are irritatingly real with their obstinate vagaries. The Gryphon and the Mock Turtle are lacrymosely musical.

In the second part the land of the Chess Queens has moments of real unbalance with its defiance of time and space. Occasionally one has to withdraw from the fantasy to remember what sanity feels like.

Where the production will most enchant children it will probably unsettle grownups as they find they are completely taken in by the soundness of nonsense.

"Alice" has a weird sort of continuity with delightful music to bridge changes, and a spotlight to pick out the little girl as her imagination performs a constant montage of settings.

Bambi Linn is an entrancing heroine of the adventures. She plays with utmost simplicity and suggests exquisitely the stout didactic sureness of real youth.

Caterwauling Queen.

When the occasion warrants she dances with the same exuberant delicacy with which she did the ballet in "Carousel." She is fleet and imaginative, and projects a complete acceptance of and belief in her dream.

The stalwarts of ART give bright brief pictures of the odd and wonderful characters. Eva LeGallienne is a boozy, disheveled White Queen who flies through the air and caterwauls on the least provocation.

Margaret Webster is severe and confidently daffy as her red counterpart.

Richard Waring is a neurotic Hatter and Theodore Tenley is the superior emerald caterpillar. John Becher is a sullen tyrant of a Queen of Hearts.

A couple of nicely handled musical numbers are offered by Angus Cairns as the weeping Turtle and Philip Bourneuf in the role of the unbalanced White Knight.

Delightful Interlude.

A delightful interlude is the marionette playlet of the Walrus and the Carpenter with their pathetic little Oysters as their saga is sung by Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The loose-jointed, inanimate dolls carry the whole illusion of wackiness a step further.

The production is designed with the artful air of a child's drawings. It moves over hill and dale and by the sea through a genuinely 7-year-old eye.

The complicated procedure went off without hitches at the opening but will doubtless become smoother as the show is repeated.

It would be idle to deny that there are slow moments in this "Alice." Often there is more talk than action, but just as in any good dream the emotional pace must vary.

Daily Mirror

APRIL 7, 1947

Alice in Wonderland Comes to Life

By ROBERT COLEMAN

The International Theatre is going to be a wonderful place to park Junior now that Rita Hassan and the American Repertory Theatre have revived "Alice in Wonderland" there.

As adapted by Eva Le Gallienne and Florida Friebus from Lewis Carroll's immortal tome, "Alice" is a Walt Disney cartoon, with point, come to life on the stage.

Though Carroll's brilliant and bizarre story was a gift for the kiddies, it was, like those Christmas trains and shilling mark or chemistry sets, promptly appropriated by the grown-ups.

However, it looks like the juveniles are going to put up a furious fight for their property. The International's box office reports sell outs for the next few matinees, with a majority of the tickets being corralled by the small fry.

The current revival is superlative. Co-author Le Gallienne has done a tip top job of casting and staging. The scenery and costumes by Robert Rowe Paddock and Noel Taylor will delight even the most exacting Tennielite.

Remo Bufano has created intriguing masques for the Looking Glass Land characters and huge, marvelous marionettes. His towering, rope manipulated Walrus and Carpenter are as fascinating as the figures in a Macy parade.

Miss Le Gallienne has shown commendable judgment in her selection of an Alice. Though Bambi Linn was an Agnes de Mille ballerina in "Oklahoma and "Carousel," she presently proves herself an accomplished and charming actress.

Because of her dance training she moves gracefully, and she reads her part like a veteran trouper. Miss Linn is quite the most beguiling young lady to lend distinction to the drama in the past several semesters.

Director Le Gallienne, doubling in brass as the White Chess Queen, and Margaret Webster, as her Red counterpart, are excellent. Citations of merit also should go to Richard Waring, Philip Bourneuf, Raymond Greenleaf, Jack Manning, Eugene Struckmann, Theodore Tenley, Angus Cairns, Robert Rawlings, Henry Jones, Frederick Hunter, John Becher and William Windom.

Richard Addinsell has composed a score that matches the moods of the script.

Lest adults get the impression from the above that "Alice" is strictly a dish for the kindergarten set, we might do well to point out that the first night audience, composed of customers old enough to vote, had a dandy time.

The lady sitting a couple of seats away in our row got so excited she sat on the edge of her seat and parked her face on the shoulder of the gentleman in front for fear she would miss something.

Miss Le Gallienne's "Wonderland" should prove a tonic for the A. R. T.'s ailing finances.

PM

APRIL 7, 1947

Kronenberger

A Great Nonsense Book Makes an Engaging Play

I didn't see *Alice in Wonderland* when Eva Le Gallienne produced it at the Civic Repertory in the early '30s. But it now becomes clear that I missed a very pleasant evening. For this stage version of both the Alice books—it actually starts off with Alice going, not down the rabbit-hole, but through the looking-glass—is nimbly contrived and fetchingly produced. It is still very much Lewis. Carroll, and it is altogether Tenniel, whose drawings have been scrupulously and most successfully copied in the matter of sets, costumes and animal life.

• • •

I suppose *Alice* is the only thing I've ever seen on the stage that I seem to have known forever and that I almost know by heart. In that sense, it's not easy to say how much of my enjoyment lay in what I was seeing and hearing, and how much in what I kept waiting to see and hear. (It was a guess, for one thing, as to what would not be cut.) But plainly, as the episodes followed one another, much of the magic of the Rev. Mr. Dodgson's fantasies, much of the appalling logic of his nonsense, much of his characters' bewildering behavior, retained its bookshelf vitality. And there were specially good moments, such as the Trial Scene, or as having marionettes act out *The Walrus and the Carpenter* while Tweedledum and Tweedledee recited it. It was not all of a piece, to be sure. Things went slack at times; and there was not all the dreamlike queerness there might have been. But, it *was Alice in Wonderland;* and Bambi Linn, it seemed to me, *was* Alice. She not only looked like her pictures, but she had a child's innocence, curiosity, and charm.

• • •

At this date, no one need write—and least of all in stage terms—about Alice's various classic virtues. But treated as Broadway has been to so many coy and sticky fantasies, one can't help remarking how wonderful *Alice* is just for being so wonderfully unsentimental. That, I am sure, is one of the main reasons why children like it; it is an absolute orgy of rudeness and outrageousness. Only so gentle a spirit as that darling of the psychoanalysts, Lewis Carroll, could have been so bold and implacable; for only so repressed a one would have felt the inner need to be.

In the huge and generally effective cast, Margaret Webster and Miss Le Gallienne play the Red and the White Chess Queen, John Becher the Queen of Hearts, Raymond Greenleaf the Duchess, Philip Bourneuf the White Knight, Richard Waring the Mad Hatter, and Angus Cairns the Mock Turtle. Robert Rawlings and Jack Manning make a very good Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and Henry Jones doubles brightly as the Mouse and Humpty-Dumpty. There is agreeable music by Richard Addinsell; and Robert Rowe Paddock, Noel Taylor and Remo Buffano deserve special credit for the sets, the costumes, and the masks and marionettes; as does Miss Le Gallienne for the over-all staging.

Take the kids to *Alice;* what starts out as a good deed on your part will wind up as a good time.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

New York Post

APRIL 7, 1947

'Alice in Wonderland' Delightfully Staged

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

For a delightful if somewhat specialized adventure in theatre-going, you are hereby advised to look in on Eva LeGallienne's production of "Alice in Wonderland," which Rita Hassan and the American Repertory Theatre revived Saturday night, after an interval of some fifteen years, in a version that is bigger and better than ever. I think you will find it gay, humorous and strangely touching, and, as for your children, if they don't find it enchanting I would advise you to drop them immediately.

Imagination has hitherto not been exactly the shining virtue of the Repertory Company's somewhat stolid presentations, but, in telling of Alice's historic adventures down the rabbit hole and in the looking glass, it is the quality which, together with a high spiritual fidelity to the original, gives the production its enchantment. With settings by Robert Rowe Paddock, costumes by Noel Taylor and masks and marionettes by Remo Buffano, all of which follow the wonderful Tenniel illustrations admirably, this dramatic version of an unquestioned masterpiece of English letters is something of a masterpiece in its own right.

With all the excellences of the adaptation by Miss LeGallienne and Florida Friebus and Miss LeGallienne's inventive staging, "Alice in Wonderland" would still be no stronger than its Alice, and here the news is particularly happy. For Bambi Linn, the reformed ballet dancer, who has the all-important role, is, so far as I am concerned, complete perfection in it. Her sweet, infinitely courteous gravity is as lovely and as right as her looks, her grace and her bearing, and the result is a captivating performance.

Although I saw Miss LeGallienne's production when it was done here originally, with Josephine Hutchinson in the title role, its details are not clear enough in my mind for any comparisons, save that neither Miss Linn nor the current version in general suffers from contrast with nostalgic memories. The scene where the mock turtle croons through a seashell microphone must certainly be new, and I suppose it should be condemned as false to the Lewis Carroll mood, but I found it very funny.

Compared to Alice the other characters are, of course, unimportant, but all of them are properly managed. I was particularly impressed by the spry agility of Miss LeGallienne (who seems to have been half a dozen women Saturday night) as the White Queen, when she darted through the air propelled by wires. I also liked the genial senility of Philip Bourneuf as the White Knight, was awed by the regal ferocity of Margaret Webster as the Red Queen, and enjoyed Angus Cairns' anachronistic crooning as the mock turtle. There must be praise, incidentally, for the Richard Addinsell score. In a word or two, "Alice in Wonderland" struck me as a joy.

Somehow, I think it might have been a good thing if the American Repertory Theatre had begun its season with the current offering.

Journal-American

APRIL 7, 1947

International Revives 'Alice'

By ROBERT GARLAND

Sober, industrious and wider awake than a couple of my fellows, I enjoyed last Saturday's revival of Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" at the International Theatre to the best of my unappreciated ability. I like it as much as most of the other aisle-sitters did. But not as much as some of them are certain to pretend. Enjoying "Alice" is a drama critic's bounden duty.

Fifteen years ago, this Eva Le Gallienne-Florida Friebus "dramatization" of the Lewis Carroll classic seemed fresh, funny and not too, too whimsical down on 14th street. Even then, coming up-town to 42nd Street, was none too good for it. Now, having moved further north to Columbus Circle, it has not recovered all its freshness, funniness and charm...

Maybe that atom bomb has cast its hellish spell upon it.

* * *

Too Much Everything

As (and I quote Burns Mantle) a faithful transcription of the well-loved children's classic read mostly by their elders (unquote) "Alice in Wonderland" suffers nowadays from too much of almost everything except ability. Especially in the second half, which deals with the Looking Glass Land where the chessmen, including the Red and White Queens, reside.

These, however, are understandable, along with the White Knight and the Duchess and the Mad Hatter who comes earlier in the evening. But in the "Walrus and the Carpenter" the lines are lost as recited by Tweedledum and Tweedledee against the music carrying-on down in the orchestra and the marionettes carrying-on up on the stage.

This immortal nonsense must be heard to be appreciated.

* * *

Old Timers Best

Bambi Linn (by special arrangement with David O. Selznick is Tenniel-like and graceful as Alice, but she seldom manages to get inside the character as did Josephine Hutchinson in 1932. Hers is no great power of projecting. It is old timers such as Margaret Webster, Miss Le Gallienne, Raymond Greenleaf and Philip Bourneuf who come over at the International.

The music of Richard Addinsell has been elaborated unduly, although "Soup, Beautiful Soup" remains one of the whimsey's highspots. Now, as 15 years ago, Remo Bufano's masks and marionettes and the after-John-Tenniel scenery and costumes are the piece's must-sees. So the kiddies, at all those sold-out matinees, will doubtless find this revival of "Alice in Wonderland" rewarding...

They'll make Alice's Carrollian creatures speak up, at any rate.

The New York Times

APRIL 7, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

For fifteen years the stage version of "Alice In Wonderland" has been one of the sunniest memories of The Civic Repertory Theatre. But one theatregoer whose memory leaks, had forgotten how captivating it is. Put on at the International Theatre on Saturday evening, this animation of the Lewis Carroll classics by Eva Le Gallienne and Florida Friebus turns out to be a little masterpiece of humorous fantasy, based again on the Tenniel drawings, but freshened by a new production and acted with originality and relish.

The part of the wandering Alice is pitiless in length. Poor Alice in blue gingham has to be on the stage every moment, simulating astonishment and preserving the good manners of a well brought up young lady of the nineteenth century. Bambi Linn of the golden hair and dancer's grace is giving an ideal performance, which is childlike in the simplicity but professional in its comedy impulse.

* * *

As the excitable White Chess Queen, Miss Le Gallienne is immensely funny; and Peggy Webster, as the Red Chess Queen, is witty in a vein that caricatures the short tempers of grown-up people. As a matter of fact, the character bits all through the performance are sententiously amusing in the acting of players who make their points subtly—Raymond Greenleaf as the testy Duchess, Richard Waring as the Mad Hatter, John Becher as the Queen of Hearts, Angus Cairns as the Mock Turtle, Henry Jones as Humpty Dumpty and Philip Bourneuf as the White Knight.

The production is a huge one. The scenery by Robert Rowe Paddock, the costumes by Noel Taylor and the gay masks by Remo Bufano provide a living panorama of the Tenniel drawings; and Richard Addinsell's sparkling score goes beyond musical accompaniment into the sphere of creative interpretation. The score includes some lovely arias, but the undertones of light orchestral music all the way through capture the fairy-story quality of the play.

From the strict point of view, the production may be in fact too elaborate. Out of reverence for the Carroll book the authors have included episodes that could be dropped, like the scenes in the railway carriage and in the shop, which are heavy and contribute little to the basic story. The pleasant diversion of the marionette show also draws attention away from the Walrus and the Carpenter doggerel, which is worth more emphasis on its literary merits. Something will have to be done in succeeding performances to make some of the characters more audible. At the opening the Cheshire Cat could scarcely be heard; and one or two of the other characters were muffled under the masks.

But these are minor imperfections in a delightful performance that has one great virtue: It accurately recaptures the dry humor of Carroll's book. For "Alice In Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass" do not condescend to the young or to the child that still lingers in the minds of adults. They are a travesty on grown-up logic. Their madness seems entirely reasonable. And Miss Le Gallienne's performance retains the scolding temper and the severity of the Carroll characters. O frabjous day! Miss Le Gallienne's jabberwock is authentic and delightful.

"Barefoot Boy With Cheek"

Daily Mirror

APRIL 4, 1947

'Barefoot Boy' Fresh And Lively Hit

By ROBERT COLEMAN

George Abbott, champion of youth, brought a fresh and lively musical hit, "Barefoot Boy With Cheek," to the Martin Beck Theatre last evening. It was written by newcomers to the stage and played ingratiatingly by a host of talented juveniles and ingenues.

The book was fashioned by Max Shulman from a novel by himself. A native of Minnesota, Shulman nostalgically satirizes the campus vamps, glamor boys, athletes, politicians and half-baked radicals indigenous to the campus of his State's university.

Though the adaptation lacks some of the novel's subtlty and suavity, it packs plenty of rousing, irresistible hilarity. If it sometimes resorts to obvious corn, it could be argued that college Joes and Janes aren't as sophisticated as they like to believe themselves.

Sidney Lippman has composed tunes that should spell treasure for recording, radio and juke box tycoons, and Sylvia has complemented it with catchy, clever lyrics.

Jo Mielziner has designed atmospheric scenery and Alvin Colt costumes that would have delighted John Held. The choreography by Richard Barstow is effective and elementary. Based on ballet it emphasizes turns but scorns leaps, beats and lifts.

Nancy Walker, an accomplished comedienne, has herself a field day as Yetta Samovar, a Commie co-ed who discovers the reactionery pleasures of a sorority house. Billy Redfield and Ellen Hanley handle the major romantic chores attractively. Red Buttons and Jack Williams are stalwarts in the laugh brigade.

Before he joined Uncle Sam's Army in World War II, Williams was rated one of Broadway's ace tapsters. We doubt that his tootsies lost their agility on the drill field. So why haven't producer-director Abbott and choreographer Barstow included some of his nimble footwork in the proceedings?

Philip Coolidge, heretofore a dramatic actor, proves himself a gifted light comic, getting more laughs from the role of a cynical, impoverished professor than author Shulman crammed into it. We think he would garner even more chuckles from the part, if impresario Abbot would direct him to play to the stage instead of the audience.

Others in the large cast meriting salutes are Billie Lou Watt, Shirley Van, Solen Burry, Tommy Farrell, June Graham, Leonard Claret, Mary Bly Harwood, Douglas Deane, Ray Kirchner and that very dependable veteran, James Lane.

Abbott is a master at campus capers, and "Barefoot Boy" should prove a popular successor to his "Best Foot Forward." Oh, yes there's a swingy march in the current edition of Abbot collegiana that looms as a competitor to "Buckle Down Wynsocki." It's titled "Star of the North Star State."

'BAREFOOT BOY WITH CHEEK.'

Musical comedy, with book by Max Shulman, taken from his novel; music by Sidney Lippman; lyrics by Sylvia Dee; scenery and lighting by Jo Mielziner; choreography by Richard Barstow; vocal arrangements by Hugh Martin; costumes by Alvin Colt; orchestrations by Philip Lang; musical director, Milton Rosenstock; production staged by George Abbott; presented by George Abbott at the Martin Beck Theater, Thursday evening, April 3, 1947. The cast:

Shyster Fiscal	Red Buttons
Roger Hallfellow	Jack Williams
Van Varsity	Ben Murphy
Charlie Convertible	Loren Welch
Freshman	Patrick Kingdon
Asa Hearthrug	Billy Redfield
Elno Pfilliklinnenn	Benjamin Miller
Nobless Oblige	Billie Lou Watt
Clothilde Pfefferkorn	Ellen Hanley
Yetta Samovar	Nancy Walker
Professor Schultz	Philip Coolidge
Peggy Hopp	Shirley Van
Kermit McDermott	Jerry Austen
Boris Fiveyearplan	Solen Burry
Playwright	Martin Sameth
Bartender	James Lane
Muskie Pike	Tommy Farrell
First Band Member	Harris Gondell
Second Bank Member	Nathaniel Frey

DAILY NEWS

APRIL 4, 1947

'Barefoot Boy' Another Campus Musical by Prof. George Abbott

By JOHN CHAPMAN

As a producer of musical comedies, George Abbott has an undergraduate's heart and some postgraduate ideas. Give him a college background and he is happy—and so, generally, are his audiences. His newest exercise in higher education—well, fairly high, anyhow—is "Barefoot Boy With Cheek," which opened last evening at the Martin Beck. It is a nicely animated version of the old campus plot, with a couple of new twists.

This time the campus is not at the mythical Pottawottamie, but is the University of Minnesota. The amusing new angle is that "Barefoot Boy" carries a message—a message in reverse. The stage has had a lot of pinko brotherhood of man stuff, both straight and in song, these last few seasons, and it's about time somebody like Abbott found an author like Max Shulman to kid the commy movement.

The radical in "Barefoot Boy" is Nancy Walker, the short, swaggering, granite-faced and gravel-voiced comedienne of "Best Foot Forward" and "On the Town." She is the campus revolutionist; to her anybody who opposes her is a cossack, a fascist or worse, and God is a deity familiar only to the bourgeois. In Miss Walker's hands the party line is exposed to laughter.

A Dead-Pan Prof.

Another novelty of the show is the presence of Philip Coolidge as a sallow, ill-clad professor who wanders across the stage once in a while and lectures the audience on campus behavior. A good deal of Mr. Coolidge's material is funny, and his delivery of it is admirable.

There are one or two pretty good songs, like "I Know I'd Know," but Sidney Lippman's music does not strike me as remarkable on the whole. Much is made to sound better than it is through the excellent vocal arrangements by Hugh Martin and the lusty singing of an attractive bunch of boys and girls. The dance arrangements by Richard Barstow are also frequently helpful, and there is a dandy big production number built around "I'll Turn a Little Cog," which is Miss Walker's dream of a sovietized America. The "Cog" number is one of Sylvia Dee's better lyrics.

The plot has something to do with the Alpha Cholera fraternity house, two sharpshooters who operate it for profit, a campus election, a dewy-eyed freshman and a starry-eyed coed. It came from a book by Mr. Shulman, same title as the musical. Since Mr. Shulman has already gone into it, I won't.

A Newcomer Scores.

Mr. Abbott always has the ability to make some untried young player turn in a good performance. In the case of the new musical it is the work of Ellen Hanley, whose only previous appearance was in a bit in "Annie Get Your Gun." Miss Hanley, who is the starry-eyed girl who gets the freshman, is demure and pretty and she does a nice job of singing "I Knew I'd Know."

The company, like any good Abbott troupe, is lively and friendly, from Miss Walker to Pat Kingdon, who plays the inevitable fat freshman. Billy Redfield is the modest campus hero, Jerry Austen the campus villain; Red Buttons plays a frat-house schemer and Jack Williams is his pal. Billie Lou Watt is a blonde coed majoring in sex, and Benjamin Miller is amusing as a feeble-minded giant who is the college football hero.

Jo Mielziner's sets are all right and Alvin Colt's costumes are excellent. One more thing: There is a campus song, "Star of the North Star State," which is rousingly staged and sung. As a tune it isn't any "Buckle Down Winsocki," but it does have zip. "Barefoot Boy" isn't any "Best Foot Forward," either, but it does well enough to get a passing grade.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

APRIL 4, 1947

= By HOWARD BARNES =

That Old College Try

THE boys and girls of the University of Minnesota are given a musical comedy sleigh ride in "Barefoot Boy With Cheek." The new George Abbott production at the Martin Beck substitutes exuberance and ribaldry for originality and style. The book, adapted by Max Shulman from his own novel, is collegiate in more than subject matter. It takes expert clowning on more than one occasion to sustain merriment in the campus shenanigans of the show. Sidney Lippman's score is generally pedestrian, although it has a few passages of lilting melody, and the Sylvia Dee lyrics strain for effect without ever being very funny. Sheer pace and all-out performing are the chief distinctions of this conventional song-and-dance carnival.

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The fraternity, around which most of the capers are cut is called the "Alpha Cholera" house, which is as good an index as any to the type of humor being peddled at the Martin Beck. There is a violent Communist-minded coed, portrayed with a tough swagger by Nancy Walker. Among the other characters are a football hero who can't read or write, a high-pressure fraternity treasurer, a big man on campus, a dumb freshman, a somewhat jaded professor of sociology and several predatory female undergraduates. They do just about what you would expect of them in an uninhibited lampoon of a state institution of learning. Fortunately Billy Redfield, Red Buttons, Ellen Hanley, Philip Coolidge and Shirley Van make stretches of the nonsense engaging.

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Miss Walker, who is an old hand at this sort of thing, is rarely at a loss in popping up the proceedings. She denounces the plutocrats, makes a play for the freshman in which she gives an amusing interpolation of a dull short story he has written and sings such comic ballads as "I'll Turn a Little Cog" and "There's a Lot of Things You Can Do With Two." Redfield, who was playing a boy soldier not so long ago in "Snafu," has presence and the promise of a voice in the part of the fraternity initiate and Buttons and Jack Williams handle their repartee briskly. Best of the whole company is Ellen Hanley. As the one nice co-ed, she is natural, utterly charming and sings the loviest of the songs, "I Knew I'd Know," entrancingly.

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As the professor, Coolidge is kept under wraps until near the ending, when he has a bright monologue with interruptions. Billie Lou Watt, Tommy Farrell and Jerry Austen add burlesque bits to the doings. The dancing is nimble and serves to fill in the cracks in the libretto. Shirley Van, June Graham and Leonard Claret are the chief executants, but a sizable ensemble pounds through Richard Barstow's choreography with a will. Jo Mielziner's scenery and lighting are quite appropriate for the fifteen scenes and the Abbott staging makes much of little. At least every one is trying hard in "Barefoot Boy With Cheek," if that is much of a recommendation.

New York Post

APRIL 4, 1947

There's a Lot of Youth In New Musical Show

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

With absolutely no disrespect to such original and adventurous musical shows as "Brigadoon, "Finian's Rainbow" and "Street Scene," it had been my impression that just what New York needed was a fast, bouncing, youthful and high-spirited girl-and-music carnival of the good, old - fashioned, conservative school. Well, George Abbott, who is quite a hand at such things, has come along with "Barefoot Boy With Cheek," which is everything I have outlined, and now I am not so sure.

Certainly the formula is all there, and in sound working order. There are agreeable and amusing songs by Sidney Lippman ad Sylvia Dee. The show moves smoothly and rapidly under Mr. Abbott's expert direction, and the cast is talented. Jo Mielziner's scenery is attractive, Alvin Colt's costumes are colorful, and Richard Barstow has staged a number of lively dances. About the entire evening there is an atmosphere of festivity and youth. Youth! Youth!

Perhaps it is that matter of youth that grows a little fatiguing. There is something disconcerting in the thought that, while the rest of us are getting older, George Abbott keeps getting younger. At least, his musical shows, which were never exactly middle-aged in their manner, appear to be rapidly becoming so callow that they are almost ostentation about it. In fact, it is so overpowering that Philip Coolidge, playing a teacher who snarls at youth, becomes the show's most sympathetic character.

If "Barefoot Boy With Cheek" has any message, it is that the younger shows get the more they remain the same. I have never read Max Shulman's novel, from which he made the current adaptation, but the musical-comedy version indicates that the boy and girl undergraduates continue to behave about the way they did in the days of George Ade's "The Merry Widow." It is rather comforting to find that, in a changing world, the favorite stock comic figures still include the dumb football player and the wild-eyed radical.

Alpha Cholera

If this report on a lively and often amusing show is somewhat ungracious, it may be because, as a non-reader of Mr. Shulman's book, I never did quite get over the shock of noting that its young men belong to a fraternity hilariously known as Alpha Cholera. I wasn't too happy, either, to find that some of the characters are named Asa Hearthrug, Yetta Samovar, Shyster Fiscal, Noblese Oblige, Clothilde Pfefferkorn and Boris Fiveyearplan. I hope I can persuade the composing room that the football player is called Eino Fflliiikklinnenn.

There are several pleasant performances. Billy Redfield is an agreeable hero, Ellen Hanley plays and sings the role of the heroine prettily, Billy Lou Watt is an attractive college flirt, and Jack Williams and Red Buttons help as fraternity house chiselers. Mr. Coolidge is sardonically amusing as the contemptuous teacher until the part gets a little out of hand, and Nancy Walker, who always intimidates me a bit, is less frightening and more amusing than usual as the campus radical. But "Barefoot Boy" isn't quite the comfort that it frequently seems on the point of being.

PM EXCLUSIVE

APRIL 6, 1947

Kronenberger

The Same Old Story In the Same Old Way

As a producer, George Abbott has longed looked rather askance at any stage character who is old enough to vote; and in *Barefoot Boy With Cheek* he has whipped up another musical comedy spoofing college life. This one concerns fraternities, student elections, soured professors, campus radicals, dumb-ox football players and a lot of assorted fruitcake at the University of Minnesota. This one is also very much like a lot of other ones. It has some of the familiar Abbott virtues – pace, youthfulness, cheerful nonsense– but the trouble with them is that they have become a little *too* familiar. Moreover, Mr. Abbott has counted on them too much. They make excellent baking powder, but they are selling here as pretty much the whole cake. Mr. Abbott has assembled some nice people, and something better than that in Nancy Walker and Philip Coolidge; but the music of *Barefoot Boy* is glaringly mediocre, the dances are never more than conventionally lively, and the book, though at times rather bright, is many other times merely cheesy.

In its better moments, *Barefoot Boy* makes good enough fun of things to be fun itself. Mr. Shulman's best stabs in this direction, though they sometimes miss the mark, are bilious-eyed Professor Schultz's disgruntled comments about undergraduates; and Philip Coolidge plays the Professor with style and a real sense of character. But much of Mr. Shulman's spoofing is either covered with rust or verging on rough-house. The biggest help to the show's antics is Nancy Walker. As Yetta Samovar, a campus Communist, she plays with all her brilliant timing, her good-humored toughness, her expressive shrugs and aggressive stride. She is rather hampered by Mr. Shulman's plugging away monotonously at her politics, and

"Barefoot Boy With Cheek"—*continued*

dipping a little deep for his laughs—going, at one point, literally to the garbage can. Furthermore, Miss Walker is at her very best when she can bellow out the right kind of ditty; and of three songs that come her way here, only one, *I'll Turn a Little Cog*, is worth her while.

* * *

Though Mr. Abbott has made a lively production number of a college song, and Ellen Hanley sings the romantic tunes very pleasantly, the music in *Barefoot Boy* is, as aforesaid, distinctly no asset. Richard Barstow's dances have youth and ginger, but are notably uninventive—and not quite so peppy as those in gayer Abbott gambols. Jo Mielziner has provided nice easily-worked sets, and in the title role Billy Redfield is likeable and easy.

Barefoot Boy has its merits; but it is so much the Abbott mixture as before, only weaker, that I found it a pretty unrewarding evening. The sun doesn't stand still, for all Broadway's would-be Joshuas. —LOUIS KRONENBERGER

The New York Times

APRIL 4, 1947

Abbott's Musical Comedy at the Martin Beck Seen as Another Class Reunion on a Dear Old College Campus

By BROOKS ATKINSON

With the devotion of an old grad, George Abbott has been rounding up the freshmen and seniors again. "Barefoot Boy With Cheek," he calls his new class reunion, and it was put on at the Martin Beck last evening. An old hand at leading the college cheer, Mr. Abbott has found a new crop of youngsters, a campus story by Max Shulman and a score of music, including a glee club special, by Sidney Lippman with some clever lyrics by Sylvia Dee.

Most of this has become a little routine in Mr. Abbott's ateliers, where the young folks have been sparking for years. But he has had the wisdom to retain one of the best of his former pupils and to give her something amusing to do.

* * *

Nancy Walker, with the aggressive jaw and the mannerisms of a gun-moll, is playing the part of a young Communist on the campus at the University of Minnesota. And Nancy is an able trouper. No one in her weight class knows more about crisp timing, the value of a quick gesture, the hilariousness of the dead-pan and the eloquence of a tough shrug of the shoulder. Her episode in the class struggle involves one amusing song, "I'll Turn a Little Cog," which she and Billy Redfield and a chorus of Muscovites translate into a very funny satire. Since Mr. Abbott has a lot of other collegiate nonsense in mind, Miss Walker's part here is not as profitable as the part she had in "On the Town." But she gives it a sardonic jauntiness that is much to be relished and the freshest item in the show.

"Barefoot Boy With Cheek" also includes a good bit part for Philip Coolidge, remembered for a fine performance in "Our Town." In Mr. Abbott's class-day reunion he is cast as a saturine college professor who despises the students and apparently also the faculty.

Wearing a shapeless, dreary, ill-fitting suit with pencils in the breast pocket, Mr. Coolidge delivers some blistering remarks with a bitterness that helps to neutralize the fraudulent boyishness of the rest of the plot. Miss Walker and Mr. Coolidge, as cynics, have the privilege of working against the romantic Shulman fable.

For it is to be feared that the business of fraternity politics and small-fry crises is less uproarious than Mr. Abbott intended, and he has to drive his students hard to create the impression of high spirits. The cast includes one young lady who has a personal style and who can also sing, which is a rare combination. She is Ellen Hanley, and "I Knew I'd Know," "Everything Leads Right Back to Love" and "When You Are Eighteen" sound mighty pretty when she sings them.

* * *

The cast includes Red Buttons, who is the undergraduate fixer; Billie Lou Watt as a belle, and a number of other odd characters knocking their brains out for an education. Although Jack Williams is a beautiful dancer, the show wastes him in a routine role in which he hardly has a chance to shake his feet. Richard Barstow, has directed the dances which have the high cultural design of current music-show dancing and look like nothing fresher than jitterbugging.

Jo Mielziner has done settings that are suitable without being inspired. The costumes, which stress noisy sport jackets, are bizarre enough to keep a student's morale high. All this material Mr. Abbott has set in fast motion after a familiar fashion. "Barefoot Boy With Cheek" is routine musical-making with a good deal of physical liveliness and no particular originality. In his association with embryo citizens Mr. Abbott has had more real fun in the past.

The Sun

APRIL 4, 1947

'Barefoot Boy With Cheek' Brisk Musical Play, Done in the Abbott Style.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

The ample stage of the theater that Martin Beck built, given over for months this season to the pipe-dreaming of Harry Hope's bedraggled house guests in "The Iceman Cometh," is now aswarm with breezy young collegians, "Barefoot Boy With Cheek" having arrived last night. It's a brisk show.

George Abbott, a director-producer who likes to have young people around, puts on the new musical comedy and it's in the Abbott tradition. Don't look for frills or fantasy in "Barefoot Boy With Cheek." There are no leprechauns popping up from behind rocks, no mystic villages suddenly turning up just across the bridge. And considering all that is new-fangled in the world of the song and dance stage, Abbott's exhibit might actually be considered old-fashioned.

But a great deal of it is good fun. The show has been brightly costumed and mounted. There are some attractive players in the cast. The dancing is good and fast. Max Shulman's book, taken from his novel, satirizes campus communism and shows the triumph of a shy freshman over a big-shot upper classman, is all right. And it's one with some funny lines scattered through it.

Sidney Lippman's score is by no means a notable one but it does offer some pleasant numbers—"Too Nice a Day To Go to School," "I'll Turn a Little Cog," "I Knew I'd Know" and "Star of the North Star State."

George Abbott doesn't go in for name casts, but his players generally have the zest to play his scenes. Nancy Walker, in the role of the communistic Yetta Samovar, who speaks for the People, is as droll as ever, and just as aggressive. Billy Redfield is tremendously ingratiating as the freshman who gets elected to the presidency of the Student Council. Red Buttons and Jack Williams, playing two conniving fraternity racketeers, give the show a lot of pace. Philip Coolidge is lean and dry and droll as a sociology professor who turns into a somewhat scornful commentator as the evening goes along.

Ellen Hanley is the girl who finally gets the young hero's pin and she sings her songs charmingly. And there are helpful performances from Billie Lou Watt, Shirley Van and Benjamin Miller. Alvin Colt's costuming job is excellent; so is the scenery from Jo Mielziner's art shop.

"Barefoot Boy With Cheek" is a collegiate musical comedy with the two ingredients, youth and speed, that are to be expected in an Abbott-directed song and dance show. It will do well at the Martin Beck.

New York World-Telegram

APRIL 4, 1947

'Barefoot Boy' Is Same Old Campus Humor

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Like time, the river, death and taxes, there is a certain type of undergraduate musical comedy that goes on forever. "Barefoot Boy with Cheek" is right in the traditional groove.

George Abbott has no peer at collecting a lot of leather-lunged young Indians to put whooping and stomping through a couple of hours of frantic paces. He has had better material in the past for his kids to work with. But if there is nothing unfamiliar here, nothing familiar is left out.

There are moments when this game of hare and hounds seems such an old acquaintance that you feel you can blink your eyes and find Zelma O'Neill up there singing the "Varsity Drag."

One of the chief reasons you do not miss the old youth movements is Nancy Walker. She continues to grow in the finest traditions of clowns.

Nancy Is Funnier.

With less standing on her ear than in the past, she is much funnier. Her timing and pantomime are expert. She has always been able to put over a song, but now she can act 40 or 50 people off the stage with a shrug of her shoulder.

Typical of her sharp comicry is a brief exit after the lyric of "There's Lots of Things." That is a little masterpiece of clowning.

Miss Walker plays the delectably christened Yetta Samovar, who believes in equality with all its communal slogans. It is a tribute to her ingenuity that she can stay as funny as she does, repeating variations of the same gag from curtain to curtain.

Three Girls and a Boy.

She is one of a trio of girls who fall on sight for the Barefoot Boy, Asa. Another is an attractive baggage known as Noblesse, who talks like a sub-debutante in True Confessions. The third is Clothilde, the studious type.

This quadrangular romance, and Yetta's Red slants, braid themselves in with another plot about Asa's sudden decision as a freshman to run against the campus hero for the presidency of the Student Council.

There are pleasant but desperate complications about money and votes, with the usual pleasant solutions. Clothilde gets Asa, after Yetta and Noblesse work out a communal plan to share all the other men in sight.

A Cheeky Hero.

Billy Redfield plays the cheeky hero in a manner that is both touching and authoritative. He stays in distracted character without plugging, and sings easily, with particular effect in "Story of Carrot."

Ellen Hanley is a sweet-voiced heroine, and Billie Lou Watt is the voracious Noblesse. Philip Coolidge plays a caustic Greek chorus of a sociology professor.

Red Buttons is a smart cracking upper classman, and Jack Williams, Jerry Austen and Loren Welch lend manly voices to the proceedings.

Tommy Farrell plays a drummer like a collegiate Oscar Levant, and Shirley Van throws herself around in a first act finale that resembles a prom at the sorority of Clara Bow and Colleen Moore.

One Song a Standout.

Aside from "I Knew I'd Know" there are no memorable tunes in the score, but nevertheless they are all sung with enthusiastic volume by the principals and the ensembles.

The costumes exaggerate every known campus vagary until the stage becomes a world of latter day John Held Jr. This approach is not often calculated to flatter a girl's figure.

It is pointed entertainment to see the wild young Communists here toasted on their own grill. Aside from that particular thread of story, "Barefoot Boy with Cheek" has an air of having been around before innumerable times.

Like ice cream, it may not be a novelty but an awful lot of people still order it.

Journal-American

APRIL 4, 1947

'Barefoot Boy' Treads Martin Beck Stage

By ROBERT GARLAND

George Abbott now turns around and kids the musical-comedy formula which has long been kidding him. "Barefoot Boy With Cheek" follows the familiar Abbottish rah-rah-rah routine, with Mr. Abbott himself poking fun at it. This time his Rover Boys are at the University of Minnesota, which is persistently co-educational by night as well as day.

There, Communism has already raised its cute and cunning head. In the person of Comrade Samovar, egged on by Comrade Fiveyearplan, social significance and sex lie down together like the British lion and the American lamb. In the Alpha Cholera Fraternity House and the Campus Publications Office their combined future is a ripe and rosy red.

If, at the Martin Beck, where all this is presently on view, the barefoot boy of the title has lost himself between Moscow and Minnesota, it must be because I have not read the novel from which the story stems. Max Shulman wrote it, rewrote it so Sylvia Dee and Sidney Lippman could surround it with their words and music.

To these you may add scenery a la "Dream Girl," by Jo Mielziner; choreography a la co-education by Richard Barstow; costumes a la Karinska by Alvin Colt; musical direction a la Lang by Milton Rosenstock and presentation, production and staging a la the prewar George Abbott with his postwar tongue in the barefoot boy's cheek.

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At Least Cheerful

Up on the W. 45th st. stage, where Eugene O'Neill's iceman cameth and wenteth recently, "Barefoot Boy with Cheek" is at least cheerful. While the meagre, not always intelligible, narrative is working toward its obvious end, there're bustle, confusion and the made-to-order exuberancy for which Producer-Director Abbott is well known.

While Yetta Samovar and Boris Fiveyearplan are boring from within—and not infrequently from without, if you ask me—Asa Hearthrug is getting himself elected president, or something, of the Alpha Cholera Fraternity House. Or maybe it's the Most-Likely-to-Grow-up Character on the University of Minnesota campus.

He's aided and abetted by such members of the student body as Roger Hailfellow, Shyster Fiscal, Van Varsity and Charlie Convertible. If memory can be relied upon, Eino Fiiliikkiinnenn, Kermit McDermott, Muskie Pike and the likes of them are not exactly for him. He wins, however, to the tune of "It Couldn't Be Done, But We Did It."

Not only at Alpha Cholera, but in classroom, pig sty and corridor, Asa Hearthrug works his way to the top singing "The Legendary Eino Fiiliikkiinnenn," "I'll Turn a Little Cog," "Everything Leads Right Back to Love" and "There's Lots of Things You Can Do With Two but Not With Three," as he does so.

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Walkerian Wonder

Frankly, there seems to be an awful lot of youth up on that stage from which "The Iceman Cometh" departed. Which is why the Professor Schultz of Philip Coolidge is the high-spot of my all-too-collegiate evening. Mr. Coolidge's professor is the professor to end all professors. And their colleges!

As Yetta Samovar, Nancy Walker practically repeats her performance as Brunhilde Esterhazy, the lady taxi-driver, in "On the Town." Only her material is not as becoming. Yet, given an "I'll Turn a Little Cog" with Billy Redfield or a "Little Yetta's Gonna Get a Man" on her own, she'll work a Walkerian wonder.

The others, Billy Redfield, Red Buttons, Jack Williams, Jerry Austen and even Tommy Farrell are well out of any world I know. So I can't say more than "maybe" about them. Benjamin Miller, a lifeguard who became a kitchen helper, a detective who became a machinist, a truck driver who became a bouncer, is an Eino Fiiliikkiinnenn I know . . .

Along with last night's cushy congregation, I want to like "Barefoot Boy with Cheek" very much indeed. But it kind of wears me down. Even with its best foot forward, it seems more forced than funny, more collegiate than charming, more anachronistic than necessary. Even George Abbott can't kid his old stuff into new.

"Tenting Tonight"

PM

APRIL 4, 1947

—Kronenberger—

Happy Ending For Everyone But the Author

PM Reviews

One has no wish to be harsh with *Tenting Tonight*, yet there is no way of not being. Certainly the play tries its best to be lively, but the fact remains that it is only exhausting. It is one of those youthful, noisy, never - sedentary, gag-crammed little comedies that affect you like an alarm clock that won't stop ringing.

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More specifically, it concerns several ex-GIs (one of them with a wife) who are having trouble getting into a certain college because they can't find a place to live. The big shot among the college trustees, moreover, callously refuses to lift a finger; is, indeed, quite incensed at a professor and his wife whom the boys wheedle into making a sleeping-car of their living-room. The plot, which contains the usual jigger or two of romance, turns wilder when a racketeer who has leased a building to open a night spot, is talked into making a dormitory of it instead. This only starts more rumpus, but love and education eventually triumph.

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Mr. Gould slows down the horseplay at several points to plead the peace-time cause of our former warriors, and assail those who have already forgotten it. But his plea is more well-meant than weighty, and he is soon back again at the wintry business of gags and gaiety. Possibly his gags aren't the worst in the world, but almost all of them somehow glance off his racket or shoot square into the net.

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Mr. Faussett's direction is not notable, either; and most of the cast go down with their lines. But Joshua Shelley turns in a holding and amusing performance as an ex-GI who makes book while aspiring to book learning; June Dayton is an agreeable ingenue; and, against heavy odds, Jackie Kelk at least holds his own.

—Louis Kronenberger

'TENTING TONIGHT.'

Play by Frank Gould; directed by Hudson Faussett; setting by John Root; costumes supervised by Robert Moore; presented by Saul Fischbein at the Booth Theater Wednesday evening, April 2, 1947. The cast:

Peter Roberts	Richard Clark
Edna Roberts	June Dayton
Lester Pringle	Michael Road
Leonie Roberts	Jean Muir
Phil Alexander	Dean Harens
Stanley Fowler	Ralph Brooke
Sue Fowler	Betty Caulfield
Theda Henderson	Ethel Remey
Marvin Henderson	William David
Eli of Smallens	Jackie Kelk
Joe Wollinski	Joshua Shelley
Yeck Janowski	Henry Lascoe
Sherman	Michael Lewin
Harry Nash	Forrest Taylor Jr.
Billy Heffernan	Edward de Valda
Sammy Foley	James Fallon

SYNOPSIS—The action of the play takes place in the combination living-room study of Peter Robert's home in a small college town. Time—The present. Act I—Scene 1. A September evening. Scene 2. The following afternoon. Act II—Three days later, evening. Act III—The following morning.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

APRIL 3, 1947

= By HOWARD BARNES =

On the Old Campus Grounds

THERE may be antic aspects about ex-G. I.s intent on higher education, but Frank Gould has disclosed few of them in "Tenting Tonight." The six featured players who struggle with his comedy at the Booth deserve their billing just for the try. One Joshua Shelley even succeeds in projecting a comic character so forcefully that it emerges in amusing contours without any visible help from the script. For the most part, the company bows to shoddy dialogue and bedraggled situations. The dramatic potentialities of the G. I. bill of rights remain almost exactly as they were before "Tenting Tonight" was written.

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It has been Gould's notion to explore the lack of housing facilities for veterans in a small college. A professor's home is invaded by a group of reconverted eager beavers who get him and themselves canned before a specious ending. There is considerable army jargon and there are wisps of high-sounding talk about the rights of erstwhile soldiers on the campus. And, surprising as it may seem, the author has managed to introduce a romance in the midst of alleged merriment. At the risk of giving away the climax, let it be noted that boy gets girl.

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That Shelley is able to infuse a scene or two with a bit of fun is something of a triumph. As a lad with a photographic mind, who works as a bookie when he is not doing home work and enlists the aid of a gambling syndicate to solve his buddies' problems, he gives a clean and sardonically amusing performance. Unfortunately, it merely accentuates the general lack of comic material at the Booth. Henry Lascoe gives him a bit of support as a big-hearted night-club impresario, and Jackie Kelk has a jesting moment or two to interrupt the overall tedium.

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Dean Harens and June Dayton are asked to cope with the author's love scenes. They should have been given some sort of handicap. Jean Muir is lovely and assured in the somewhat shadowy role of the professor's wife and William David splutters in stock fashion as a college trustee who wants no part of ex-G. I.s. There is a nice setting by John Root. Gould has not wanted players or production for his comedy. All that "Tenting Tonight" has needed is a bit of imaginative, original and humorous writing.

Daily Mirror

APRIL 3, 1947

'Tenting Tonight' Has Too Many Ideas

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Most plays suffer from too few ideas. "Tenting Tonight," which Saul Fischbein presented at the Booth Theatre last evening, suffers from too many. Author Frank Gould has crowded enough plot into his script for half a dozen comedies, leaving himself little time to develop it into polished entertainment.

Gould starts out to do a play about the problem of providing living accomodations for ex-GIs in search of an education. Plymouth College just hasn't enough rooms for its entrants.

A couple take sleeping space on the desks in a newspaper office. Another parks on a pool-room table. Others install their Army cots in a dirty basement. Then the ladies of the town decide to help.

A professor's wife plans to rent out her living room. By the time her husband, seeking peace after lengthy service overseas, gets around to vetoing the idea, three GIs and a war bride have moved in.

There's material for an amusing comedy. But Gould isn't satisfied. He has one of the lads, earning his way through college as a bookmaker, interest some big time gamblers in making a dormitory of a factory they've leased for a night club and gaming house.

There's material for an amusing comedy. But still Gould isn't satisfied. Next he has the town's biggest stuffed shirt and dominant voice in the college councils get himself a chunk of glory by subsidizing the dormitory.

A superfluity of twists and gags doesn't leave room for the satisfactory development of characters. Just when you've been introduced to someone who interests you, someone else pops up to prevent your getting better acquainted.

The result is a jerky, mechanical assembly line on which are strung people you might like to know, eccentrics, odd ends of plot, vaudeville jokes and a subject that has inspired better plays and movies.

Richard Clark and Jean Muir are good as the professor and his sympathetic wife. William David is at home as the pompous campus bigshot. Henry Lascoe does well by an underworld smartie with a heart of gold.

The young fry are in the capable hands of Joshua Shelley, Dean Harens, Ralph Brooke, Jackie Kelk, June Dayton, Michael Road and Michael Lewin.

Shelly and Harens have the juc'est roles and capitalize on them. Shelley has a flair for comedy and a first rate sense of timing. Harens a personable juvenile, should improve his diction.

Hudson Faussett's direction sets a speedy tempo.

Like the housing shortage, "Tenting Tonight" promises to be a temporary affair. It has a few hilarious moments, but not sufficient to make the Booth's till tinkle a hit parade tune.

New York Post

APRIL 3, 1947

'Tenting Tonight' Is Spring Mishap

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

The theatre last night suffered one of those minor mishaps characteristic of the spring, or silly, season. It was something called "Tenting Tonight," and, like so many ramshackle works of its kind, it was harmless and well-intentioned. In fact, there was nothing really wrong with the new comedy by Frank Gould, which somehow managed to find shelter at the hospitable Booth Theatre, save its atmosphere of witless dullness.

In a way, "Tenting Tonight" is even a bit ambitious. At least, it attempts to combine a post-war lesson with its farcical manipulations, as it contemplates the housing shortage, the problems of the ex-GI at college, and the quick public neglect of the returned veteran. In the process, some racketeers manage to get into the plot and start a crap game, but it didn't seem to stir things up very much.

For Historians

For future historians of the drama's doldrums, it might be recorded that the scene is the home of a teacher of chemistry in a small college town. His wife wants to do something for the homeless returned soldier-students, and it isn't long before the apartment and the plot are cluttered with friendly and very lovable ex-GIs, a disagreeable ex-officer, a heartless college trustee, a timorous freshman who turns out to have been a war hero, a decidely minor romance and those aforementioned racketeers. In the end, a proposed night club becomes the GI college dormitory, which is the happy ending.

As usual, in these desultory mischances, the comics have a slightly happier time of it than the players of the straight roles. Thus Joshua Shelley, as a student bookmaker, and Jackie Kelk, as the frightened freshman, are rather better off than such pleasant performers as Jean Muir, June Dayton and Dean Harens, who are more seriously concerned with the plot. It did seem, too, that Mr. Harens pressed a little hard on the charm.

In dim and distant fashion, "Tenting Tonight" perhaps bears a slight relationship to both "John Loves Mary" and "The Whole World Over," but that only serves to remind you how entertaining the two latter comedies really are.

The Sun

APRIL 3, 1947

'Tenting Tonight' Clamorous, Exhausting Comedy, Presented at the Booth.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"Tenting Tonight," Frank Gould's comedy about the housing problem of American universities and the difficulties that education-seeking ex-G. I.'s experience in finding bed and board, is a clamorous and exhausting comedy, rompish in an elephantine way. It barged into the Booth last night when the proprietor wasn't looking.

Playwright Gould writes of three erstwhile service men, one with a wife, who have been sleeping on desks and pool tables and who move into the already overcrowded campus cottage of a chemistry professor. Then the ruction begins. It continues until a big-hearted racketeer turns over an old factory building for use as a dormitory. This saves the situation for the school, saves the professor his job, and makes a hero of the fatuous chairman of the board. And it's the author's notion that colleges can do worse than work along with gangsters in their quest for dormitory space.

"Tenting Tonight," which has some declamatory, high-purpose moments, is clumsily written and strenuously acted. Dean Harens, as the most imaginative of the G. I.'s, plays with enough energy to bounce off the stage and into the aisles, and there were moments last night when I thought he would.

The best performances are those of Jackie Kelk and Joshua Shelley, playing a student with a passion for the races. June Dayton is a bright ingenue who will give an attractive performance when an author writes her a part. Jean Muir is quite lost as the professor's wife, but it's really no role at all. Richard Clark, Michael Road, Ralph Brooke and William David are among the other in-good-standing Equity participants in the evening's unfortunate exercises. Hudson Faussett has directed and the setting was done by John Root.

"Tenting Tonight" is a heavy-handed frolic from which the two young women who were sponsoring it prudently withdrew several days ago. Saul Fischbein, a brave fellow, took over the management. By this time he is probably thinking it over—and wondering why.

"Tenting Tonight" is hopeless.

Journal American

APRIL 3, 1947

'Tenting Tonight' At Booth Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

The housing situation at the Booth is more farcical and less attractive than the housing situation at the Biltmore. The difference, I wouldn't be surprised, is in the quality of the characters involved. Where, in "The Whole World Over," the Russians are sweet, friendly and high principled, the Americans in "Tenting Tonight" are hard, quarrelsome and seldom on the level.

Just about seven years ago, Frank Gould authored a Peter-Grimmish play in which an electrocuted young man came home to roost in an effort to console a family which, if memory serves, was jolly well rid of him. David Wayne, he of "Finian's Rainbow," was in that one! Now, with a World War come and gone between times, Mr. Gould is no bigger and better playwright.

His new one is the "Tenting Tonight" from which Judith Abbott and Mary Mason withdrew as co-producers and which Saul Fschbein sponsored on his own last night beside the Shubert Alley. Just why, I'm not prepared to tell you. But, if seeing and hearing are believing, Mr. Fischbein's optimism in connection with Mr. Gould's second venture is not altogether unselfish.

The hard, quarrelsome and dishonest United Statesers involved in the unfolding of "Tenting Tonight" are gathered under one roof in a small American college town. The roof is that of Prof. Peter Roberts and his wife, Edna. While Edna is a fairly level-headed female, Peter seems to attract the kind of collegians who belong in a musical-comedy—if anywhere!

One and all, they haven't got a place to lay their heads. Or anything, for that matter. So, luggage, wives and boy-friends, they settle down on the mildly-resisting Roberts, making of their living-room a dormitory and of their private lives a stew. Especially the ex-GI called Philip Alexander. Phil, getting to be a big boy now, is an American-made James Mason.

Even without whiskers, Phil sets out to be the lady-killer of the campus. Surrounded by fellow-students of dubious pasts, disastrous presents, and doubtful futures, he takes over the professor's house, the professor's college and the professor's town. And, I fancy, the round-heeled young person who's the professor's blood relation. Leonie's the lady's name.

If "Tenting Tonight" were better acted than it is, it would still be just another new arrival at the Booth. But, under the direction of the Hudson Faucett who has money in the show, the acting is —well, let's be nice for Holy Week and say, uneven! As philandering Phil, the campus Casanova, Dean Harens is back from Hollywooden with Hollywooden habits in his hair.

As for the co-operating players, Jean Muir's dependable as Leonie, the piece's pretty push-over; Jackie Kelk's out of the Aldrich Family as Elliott Smollens; Joshua Shelley's a graduate of vaudeville as Joe Wollinski; Michael Road's a Malden (Mass.) Little Theatre veteran as Lester Pringle and Henry Lascoe's a boy with Brooklyn on his tongue as Yock Janowski.

Richard Clark, as the professor who can never say "No," comes nearer to reality than the others. This well may be because he's required to be neither collegiate nor cunning . . . It was sporting of Saul Fischbein to hold the bag and bring "Tenting Tonight" to town. But the deserting Judith Abbott and Mary Mason are the better judge of plays.